

Essex District Domestic Violence Roundtable Newsletter

Office of Essex District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett

PASSAGE OF NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

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GOVERNOR PATRICK SIGNS BILL WITH TOUGHER SENTENCES FOR DOMESTIC BATTERERS

Governor Deval Patrick signed a bill authored and sponsored by Essex District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett that can double the potential penalties for domestic abusers, including a provision to send batterers to state prison.

"I am grateful to the Governor and the Legislature, particularly to the House and Senate Leadership for their hard work in getting this legislation passed," said District Attorney Blodgett. "This is an important step in holding batterers accountable for their actions."

Senate Majority Leader and lead co-sponsor Fred Berry said, "As reports of violent domestic abuse continue to rise, I am proud that the legislature was able to provide our DAs with another tool to fight these cases. I especially thank District Attorney Blodgett for his tireless work toward this important victory."

"Domestic violence is on the rise and the Legislature needed to take decisive action," said Representative Steven Walsh, a House co-sponsor of the bill. "We are now sending a clear message to abusers that this victimization will not be tolerated and will result in a stiff jail sentence."

The legislation now provides Massachusetts District Attorneys the option to pursue felony charges in cases of domestic assault and domestic assault and battery in cases where the defendant has prior offenses. If pursued, this option could result in a five-year state prison sentence as opposed to the current 2 ½ year House of Correction sentence. "We know that many domestic abusers are serial batterers. The passage of this bill allows law enforcement to treat repeat offenders in the context of the overall system of abuse that these cases represent rather than as isolated incidents."

Blodgett stressed that the difference in the sentencing is significant. "In terms of holding batterers accountable, this change speaks volumes about how seriously we take this crime. Five years is a long time and can make all the difference for the victim or victims to heal and rebuild their lives," Blodgett said.

Blodgett commended Lt. Governor Tim Murray for his leadership as the Chair of the Governor's Domestic Violence Commission. Blodgett also expressed appreciation for the work of the entire Essex County delegation for their ongoing support and assistance in moving the bill through the Legislature, particularly Senators Fred Berry and Steven Baddour, Representatives Michael Costello, Robert Fennell, John Keenan and Steven Walsh.

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Gloucester Coalition for the Prevention of Domestic Abuse

The Gloucester Coalition for the Prevention of Domestic Abuse is planning a special meeting with law enforcement and court officials from Cape Ann to discuss ways to collaborate in order to address the rising incidents of domestic abuse.

In addition, the Coalition, in partnership with the Gloucester Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Partnership, is hosting a seminar with Diane Levin, the author of

So Sexy, So Soon on Saturday, April 4 from 9:00 am to noon at the O'Malley Middle School in Gloucester. The seminar will present strategies for parents to address the bombardment of young people with sexual messages by the media. For more information call 978-281-2477.

Finally, Gloucester Public Schools received a grant to raise awareness of teen dating abuse. As a result, Coalition co-chair and *In Harm's*

Way author, Nicole Richon-Schoel will produce a special version of the play that will specifically address teen dating abuse. The performance is scheduled for May 8, 2009 at Gloucester High School. For more information contact Amy Kamm at Gloucester High School.

Lynn Domestic Violence Roundtable

The Lynn Domestic Violence Roundtable has had a busy year, with members of the Roundtable providing presentations on their organizations' activities and programs. Recent presentations included the Department of Children and Families, Merrimack Valley Legal Services, the Asian Task Force, Parent/Child Trauma Recovery Program—North Shore Medical Center/HAWC, the Safe Havens Inter-

faith Partnership against Domestic Violence, North Shore Rape Crisis Center and the Lynn Gang Task Force. Upcoming presentations include Lynn Community Connections, Girls, Inc., and Family and Children's Services of Greater Lynn.

As a follow-up to the Parent/Child Trauma Recovery Program presentation, a sub-committee is currently being formed to address the

possibility of developing a safety plan for children. As a follow-up to the Safe Havens Interfaith Presentation, the Roundtable is looking to reach out to clergy in the area to update them on domestic violence resources available to them.

The Lynn DV Roundtable meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 11:00 a.m. at the Lynn Police Department.

Salem Domestic Violence Roundtable

The Salem Domestic Violence Roundtable has had a great start during its first year. Its members have provided outstanding presentations to the other Roundtable members, including presentations from HAWC, Probation, HAWC/HEART—Beverly Police Department,

Greater Lynn Senior Services—Older Battered Women's Program, Juvenile Probation, and North Shore Elder Services.

Upcoming presentations include Parent/Child Trauma Recovery Program—North Shore Medical Center/HAWC, the Victim Witness Services of the District At-

torney's Office, North Shore Rape Crisis Center and the Department of Children and Families.

The Salem Roundtable meets the second Wednesday of every month at noon at the Salem P.D.

Saugus Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The Saugus Coalition Against Domestic Violence held its annual Domestic Violence Vigil at Blessed Sacrament Church on January 25. The Vigil, which is held each winter to remember those from Massachusetts who lost their lives to domestic violence over the past year, was a great success.

Students from Saugus High School performed a short role play on teen dating violence, sang various musical selections, and read the names of the victims of domestic violence from 2008 while lighting candles.

Chairperson Katie Galenius

brought greetings to the gatherers, and Rev. Nizzi Santos Digan and Rev. Bob Leroe provided readings and led a responsive reading.

Sgt. Michael Stewart reflected on the role of the police department and impact on children in our society who are the every day victims of domestic violence.

A brief reception was held after the Vigil.

Prior to the Vigil, students at the Belmonte Middle School were provided with information and discussion sessions on teen dating violence, lead by the High School Mentoring Program. The



session concluded with assemblies on January 23. The assemblies began with a video viewing on teen dating violence and was followed up with a discussion led by Mariah Williams, former youth outreach worker. Special thanks to Greg Nicholas for coordinating the school programs.

The Saugus DV Roundtable meets the 4th Wednesday of each month at 11:00 at Town Hall.

W.I.T.H. Domestic Violence Roundtable

The Wenham, Ipswich, Topsfield and Hamilton (WITH) Domestic Violence Roundtable held a series of targeted outreach meetings. The first meeting involved representatives from each of the four police departments. Roundtable members and police officers had a productive discussion on ways the Roundtable could support the police departments in assisting victims and rais-

ing awareness in the community. Members of the clergy from each of the four communities were invited to another meeting. While only a few members of the clergy were able to attend, the meeting was worthwhile in identifying important ways the Roundtable could communicate with faith communities. In particular, they learned that youth pastors would welcome information on

teen dating violence to share with the young people in the parishes. Additional meetings targeting schools and elected officials are planned for the future.

Meetings are held the first Monday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at the Hamilton-Wenham Community House.

High Risk Assessment Teams SPOTLIGHT

The High Risk Assessment Teams around Essex County continue to do great work! Team members are meeting on a regular basis, working and collaborating together in order to provide services for high risk victims.

For more information on the teams contact:

Lynn High Risk Team— Paula Gomez Stordy (978-744-2299 x16)

Peabody High Risk Team—Sgt. Sheila McDaid (978-538-6327) or Sheila Radziewicz (978-744-2299)

Greater Newburyport High Risk Team— Kelly Dunne (978-834-9710)

Salem High Risk Team— Cheryl Watson (978-745-6610)

SPOT LIGHT ON BATTERER'S INTERVENTION PROGRAM—DOUG GAUDETTE

Any conversation about batterer intervention programs typically raises two questions. Do they work? How are they different from anger management programs?

Certified batterer intervention (BI) is an educational intervention for people who have been abusive toward an intimate partner. Certified programs strive to end domestic violence by providing educational groups for batterers and resource information to partners and victims as part of a coordinated community response. BI program curricula examine all forms of abusive behavior and their impact on intimate partners and children. Programs also explore the cultural and social influences that contribute to violence while encouraging batterers to adopt respectful and non-abusive attitudes and behaviors toward intimate partners and children.

Certified batterer intervention programs differ from anger management programs in many significant ways. The following chart may help explore some of these differences.

Anger Management

- Deal with stranger general violence
- Violence is seen as a momentary outburst
- Requires no victim contact
- No domestic violence training required
- No required participation in community anti-violence initiatives or collaborations
- No state oversight or evaluation
- No standard length of program or approved curriculum
- No requirement to screen for substance abuse

Certified Batterer Intervention

- Specifically designed to work with intimate partner violence offenders
- Physical violence is viewed as one of many forms of abuse and control
- Mandated victim contacts on, at least, three occasions
- Very specific requirements for training observations and supervision
- Mandated community linkages and collaborations with variety of victim service, criminal justice, protective service, and child witness programs
- Must undergo periodic on-site evaluation, annual review and ongoing monitoring
- Programs must be at least 80 hours in duration and must follow an approved curriculum
- Must screen clients for substance abuse

It is important to keep in mind that some anger management techniques imply that the victim provokes the anger and, therefore, he/she precipitates the abuse. This can diffuse the responsibility for the abuse and prolong the batterer's denial. Anger management techniques often fail to account for the premeditated and controlling behaviors associated with abuse. These interventions don't account for the complex nature of intimate partner violence, or the pattern of coercive control.

Effectiveness of certified batterer intervention programs can be measured in many ways. Outcome studies have shown that batterers who complete certified programs are much less likely to commit new acts of violence than those who don't attend programs or those who fail to complete them. Several studies have replicated the finding that 2/3 of men who complete batterer intervention programs do not recidivate within an 18 month follow-up period. These include:

A six-year outcome study by the MA Commissioner of Probation's Office found that certified batterer intervention programs in MA were effective in reducing recidivism. Compared to offenders referred to shorter anger management programs, substance abuse programs, general counseling or no intervention, individuals referred to certified batterer intervention programs *"were least likely to have a subsequent arraignment of any kind, an arraignment for a violent offense, or one for a subsequent restraining order violation"*.

A study funded by the Centers for Disease Control found that batterers who complete batterer intervention programs were four times less likely to be arrested for new acts of domestic violence than those who didn't attend programs or failed to complete them.

Reviewers of 22 different outcome studies of batterer intervention found that a vast majority of batterers who completed their programs remained violence free during follow-up. Success rates across the 22 studies ranged from 53%-85%.

In conclusion, certified batterer intervention programs represent a vital link in a coordinated community response. These programs model and teach accountability and alternatives to violence. Certified programs are specifically tailored to maximize victim safety while providing outreach to victims that no other service provides. Research clearly indicates that offenders least likely to recidivate are those closely monitored by the court and who complete a certified batterer intervention program.

(Doug Gaudette is with the Batterer's Intervention program at Caritas Holy Family Hospital.)

GLSS Receives Grant for New Elder Justice Network

In February, over 50 people from communities throughout the North Shore joined together to begin the process of laying the groundwork for a new multi-disciplinary coalition to raise awareness about the growing problems of elder abuse in our society. Called the Elder Justice Network of the Greater North Shore, the program is being funded, initially, by a \$10,000 mini-grant received by Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS) from the National Center on Elder Abuse's National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

The Coalition hopes to attract a broad, diverse membership from the North Shore area. Once formed, the coalition membership will set its priorities and decide what to do to launch outreach and education campaigns aimed at helping people in the general public to understand what elder abuse is and how to spot the warning signs as well as to provide resources to older victims of abuse. For more information contact Katie Galenius @ GLSS 781/586-8668

**COMING SOON—
A NEW PEABODY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ROUNDTABLE!
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION!**

